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EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SOFIA 000324

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DEPT FOR EUR/NCE, NEA/MAG AND L (J. SCHWARTZ)  
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E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/09/2017

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SUBJECT: BULGARIAN NURSES IN LIBYA: GOB UNSURE WHO IS IN CHARGE

REF: A. TRIPOLI 214

[1](#)B. TRIPOLI 209

CLASSIFIED BY: POL-ECON COUNSELOR BRAD FREDEN, REASONS 1.4(B) AND (D).

[1](#)1. (C) MFA MIDDLE EAST DIRECTOR PETKO DOYKOV TOLD US MARCH 7 THAT THE GOB BELIEVES LIBYAN MFA UNDER SECRETARY FOR EUROPEAN AFFAIRS ABDELATI OBIDI HAS BEEN AT LEAST TEMPORARILY SIDELINED IN DISCUSSIONS OVER THE FATE OF THE FIVE BULGARIAN NURSES IMPRISONED SINCE 1999. THIS, COMBINED WITH THE PERCEPTION THAT BRUSSELS MAY TRY TO "ABSORB" THE DIPLOMATIC TRACK, HAS RAISED CONCERNS IN BULGARIA THAT A LEADERSHIP VACUUM MAY DEVELOP ON BOTH SIDES OF THE ISSUE. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (C) THE GOB DOES NOT KNOW WHO, IF ANYONE, HAS REPLACED OBIDI AS THE POINT OF CONTACT FOR THE "FOUR-PARTY" (UK, U.S., EU, BULGARIA) TALKS WITH LIBYA. DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER CHAUSHEV HAS TWICE REQUESTED A MEETING WITH OBIDI THROUGH THE BULGARIAN EMBASSY IN TRIPOLI IN RECENT WEEKS, BUT HAS NOT RECEIVED A RESPONSE. DOYKOV SPECULATED THAT LIBYAN LEADER QADHAFI MAY BE HOLDING OBIDI RESPONSIBLE FOR THE PERCEIVED "ANTI-LIBYAN CAMPAIGN" THAT ERUPTED IN BULGARIA AND SPREAD TO BRUSSELS FOLLOWING THE LIBYAN COURT'S REAFFIRMATION OF THE NURSES' DEATH SENTENCES ON DECEMBER 19.

[1](#)3. (C) WE BRIEFED DOYKOV ON THE SUBSTANCE OF TRIPOLI'S CONVERSATIONS WITH LIBYAN OFFICIALS, INCLUDING OBIDI (REFTELS). DOYKOV WAS GRATEFUL FOR THE READOUT, NOTING THAT BULGARIA RELIED HEAVILY ON THE U.S. AND THE UK FOR INFORMATION REGARDING LIBYAN INTENTIONS. DOYKOV ALSO EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT, IN THE WAKE OF THE MEETING HOSTED BY COMMISSIONER FERRERO-WALDNER ON FEBRUARY 22, BRUSSELS MAY TRY TO ABSORB THE FOUR-PARTY FORMAT. DOYKOV'S CONCERN WAS THAT THIS, COMBINED WITH OBIDI'S APPARENT SIDELINING, WOULD MEAN BOTH SIDES WERE ESSENTIALLY "STARTING OVER FROM SCRATCH." IT WOULD BE BETTER, IN DOYKOV'S VIEW, FOR THE UK TO MAINTAIN THE LEAD WITHIN THE FOUR-PARTY FORMAT AND FOR THIS TRACK TO PROCEED IN PARALLEL WITH THE EU'S ACTION PLAN. BULGARIA WELCOMES MORE ENGAGEMENT BY BRUSSELS AS LONG AS FERRERO-WALDNER'S OFFICE DOES NOT ATTEMPT TO REPLACE OR ABSORB THE FOUR-PARTY FORMAT, DOYKOV SAID.

[1](#)4. (C) FM KALFIN MET WITH FERRERO-WALDNER MARCH 6 TO DISCUSS THE EU'S PACKAGE OF MEDICAL AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO LIBYA. THE PACKAGE SHOULD BE FINALIZED "SHORTLY" AND ENDORSED BY MINISTERS AT THE APRIL GAERC, DOYKOV SAID. BULGARIA IS ESSENTIALLY WAITING TO SEE WHAT COMES OUT OF THE GAERC. DOYKOV SAID HIS PERSONAL VIEW WAS THAT "THE LIBYANS WILL NOT BE VERY HAPPY WITH THE PACKAGE." HE ADDED IN THIS CONTEXT THAT THE U.S., ALONG WITH OTHER PARTICIPANTS AT THE

FEBRUARY 22 MEETING, HAD AGREED TO REVIEW ITS ASSISTANCE TO THE VICTIMS, AND ASKED IF THE REVIEW WAS COMPLETE. WE NOTED THAT BAYLOR UNIVERSITY WAS STILL WAITING FOR APPROVAL FROM THE LIBYAN SIDE FOR ITS PROJECT, BUT UNDERTOOK AT ASK WASHINGTON IF ANY ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE WAS BEING CONSIDERED.

WE REAFFIRMED THAT THERE HAD BEEN NO CHANGE IN U.S. POLICY TOWARD LIBYA WITH REGARD TO THE NURSES. DOYKOV THANKED US AND REPEATED THE GOB'S VIEW THAT U.S. HAD MORE INFLUENCE IN TRIPOLI THAN ANY OF THE OTHER PARTICIPANTS IN THE FOUR-PARTY EFFORT.

15. (SBU) IN THE MEANTIME, THE BULGARIAN PRESS REPORTED MARCH 9 THAT THE FOREIGN AFFAIRS SECRETARY OF THE LIBYAN GENERAL PEOPLE'S CONGRESS (SIC) TOLD A VISITING BULGARIAN DELEGATION ON MARCH 2 THAT THERE WERE FOUR OBSTACLES STANDING IN THE WAY OF RESOLVING THE FATE OF THE NURSES: THE "HUMILIATING" CASE AGAINST THE LIBYAN OFFICERS WHO ALLEGEDLY TORTURED THE NURSES; THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENTS RESOLUTION CALLING FOR RELEASE OF THE NURSES; THE "YOU ARE NOT ALONE" CAMPAIGN IN BULGARIA; AND "THE LACK OF ANY CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE BENGHAZI FUND." INTERESTINGLY, THERE WAS APPARENTLY NO MENTION OF EITHER CONVICTED LOCKERBIE BOMBER MEGRAHI OR THE LIBYAN COURTS.

16. (C) COMMENT. OUR SENSE IS THAT THE GOB IS LOOKING TO US AND THE BRITS FOR HELP WITH BOTH TRIPOLI AND BRUSSELS. HAVING ONLY BEEN MEMBERS OF THE UNION FOR ELEVEN WEEKS, THE BULGARIANS ARE UNSURE HOW TO CURB FERRERO-WALDNER'S ENTHUSIASM WITHOUT APPEARING UNGRATEFUL. THEY ARE, IT SEEMS, IN OVER THEIR HEADS WITH REGARD TO BOTH QADHAFI AND THE COMMISSION. WE LOOK TO THE DEPARTMENT AND EMBASSIES LONDON AND TRIPOLI FOR GUIDANCE ON HOW THE PARTIES MIGHT BEST REINVIGORATE THE DIPLOMATIC TRACK.

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